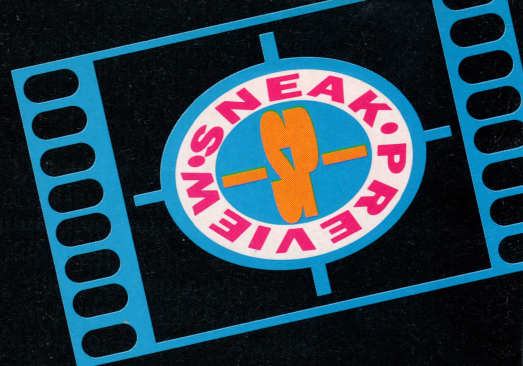


Lack of info on your favourite band of low budget bandits leaving you Troma-tised? By popular request here's a run down on **Sub-Humanoid Meltdown** and a host of other newbies from the Dynamic Duo!



'We're the smallest, cheapest movie studio in America' says Lloyd Kaufman - and he's proud of the fact! If you're a horror movie fan then you've undoubtedly chuckled and groaned your way through many a no-budget abomination bearing the Troma logo. And when Kaufman says Troma movies are cheap he really means it. Actors rarely get more than one take to get their performance right, and filming doesn't stop for a change in the weather - there's a dialogue scene in *Troma's War* where it's raining on one person but not the other...

But money isn't everything, and in these days of faceless conglomerates run by anonymous men in business suits it's a pleasant surprise to find approachable, friendly guys like Kaufman and his partner Michael Herz calling the tune. The former wears red socks and a loud suit and comes in like Mel Brooks, but underneath all that is a fellow who cares a great deal about movies. 'Our destiny is a small one,' he smiles. 'But at least we're in control of it.' That control extends to making movies, promoting them, distributing them, and selling foreign, video and television rights. A Troma Team production typically costs between \$1 and \$3 million, and if it takes more than a few weeks to shoot then the director will probably be fired! The company started up when film nuts Kaufman and Herz graduated from Yale with the dream of producing original, entertaining, money making comedies. Realising they lacked both the talent and the capital to compete with the major studios, they decided to imitate the work of 'B' movie king Roger Corman and make movies that were cheap, hilarious, socially relevant, unrelenting gimmicky, and most importantly, unforgettable....

Thus the Troma Team cranked into action to produce such classics as *The Capture Of Bigfoot* ('A story so amazing it can only be true') *Death To The Pee Wee Squad* ('They Were Too Young To See This Movie But Old Enough To Save The World!') *Evil Clutch* ('The Nightmare That Grabs You Where You Least Expect It') *Preacherman* ('He's A Smooth Talkin', Law Breakin' Pastor Of

Disaster!'), *Zombie Island Massacre* ('Toe Tappin' Machete Head Dances! Glamorous Zombie-style Cosmetic Surgery! Fabulous Air-Conditioned Tiger Pits!'), *Deadly Daphne's Revenge* ('Men Will Be Shocked! Women Will Understand!') *Nightbeast* ('If You Have The Guts - He Wants Them!') and *Trucker's Women* ('She's Got Dangerous Curves And The Classiest Chassis You Ever Saw!')

Miraculous, given their unorthodox attitude toward the craft of film-making, Troma has managed not only to survive, but also to prosper and even build up a cult following over the past seventeen years. During the



80's when the law of diminishing returns hit the movie business hard and scores of mini-majors and independent studios went to the wall, Troma just kept churning 'em out as usual. In 1984 the company had a surprise smash hit with *The Toxic Avenger* ('It's our *Gone With The Wind*' says Kaufman), the stirring saga of a hideously deformed creatures of superhuman size and strength who becomes an environmentally conscious crime-fighter. This has spawned, a number of profitable spin-offs including a kiddie TV show, *Toxic Toys*, and his own cologne called *Toxique*

('The Monstrously Manly Smell')

The company has now grown from its modest two-man beginnings to a production centre of over thirty full-time employees stretching from the Troma Building in Midtown Manhattan to production facilities in Jersey City, to satellite offices in Los Angeles and London. But Kaufman and Herz still keep a tight rein on the finances, for example, in *Toxic Avenger 3 - The Last Temptation Of Toxie* the devil that appears to tempt our monstrous hero is painted green instead of the traditional red because Troma didn't have any red paint and wouldn't buy any. Pre-production on the film

apparently included a daily dawn cruise of curbside garages in Manhattan. Rather than waste money on big stars and 'name' directors they prefer to employ enthusiastic youngsters. Take the case of 25-year-old Andrew Wolk, who was a trader on the New York stock market before he got a job as a Troma trainee. Within weeks he was shaving his head to play a bad guy who machine guns an old lady in a wheelchair in *Toxic Avenger 2*... Says Herz, 'Our films have one foot in off-the wall fantasies, one foot in real, everyday occurrences, and one foot in genuine true-to-life settings. We think that shooting in actual locations lets the audience accept the far out fantasy elements of our films more easily.' It's difficult to find much that's true to life in Troma movies like *A Nymphoid Barbarian In Dinosaur Hell* or *Surf Nazis Must Die* but somebody out there is taking their

claims seriously because Troma have recently been honoured with major retrospectives by both the American and British Film Institutes.

Of course the Troma boys have often had to change direction over the years to keep ahead of the game. When Kaufman and Herz first founded Troma way back in 1974, they were known for their revolutionary 'R' rated teen comedies. The major studios eventually began making the same kind of picture, 'Except,' says Kaufman, 'they didn't play fair. They used excellent scripts and top quality actors,' Thus Troma had to find

SUB-HUMANOID MELTDOWN



new and uncharted cinematic waters to trawl, with militant feminist dramas like *They Call Me Macho Woman* ('Born to shop she learned to kill!')

Most movie studios shy away from controversial topics to avoid offending anyone. For Kaufman and Herz, offending EVERYONE is a way of life. Consider some of the controversial real-life issues dealt with by the Troma team. *Squeeze Play* (1978) was inspired by the women's liberation movement; *The Class Of Nuke*

'Em High (1988) was inspired by the controversy surrounding the building of a nuclear plant on Long Island, and *Troma's War* (1988) took a bludgeon and a custard pie to Ronald Reagan's foreign policy initiatives.

Troma's latest blockbuster is *Sgt Kabukiman N.Y.P.D.*, which according to Herz and Kaufman is 'a celluloidinal representation of the simultaneous conflict and merging of Western and Oriental themes.' In fact it's the story of Sergeant

Harry Griswold, a tough, streetwise New York City police officer who, through a very dodgy twist of fate becomes Kabukiman, a lethal Japanese super hero who specialises in suffocating sushi rolls, fatal flying footwear and lethal chopsticks!

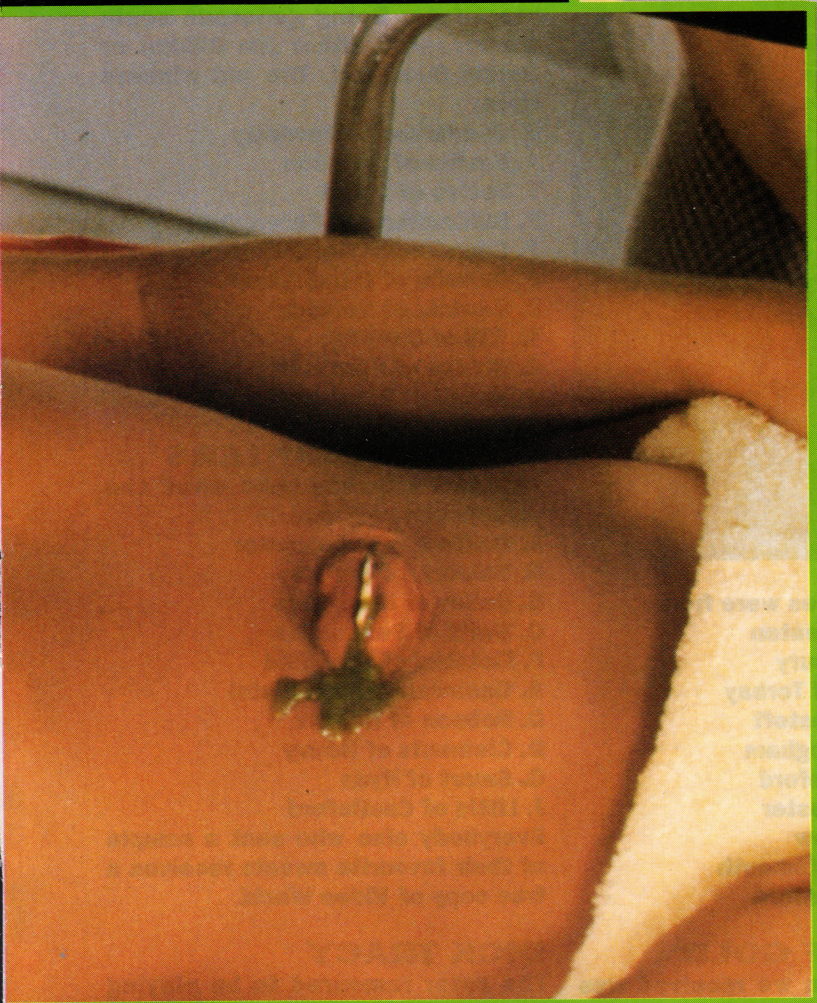
The film's production notes state 'The cast and crew were trained by T.I.G.E.M.S. (The Tromaville Institute Of Greatly Exaggerated Moviemaking Skills). They were always handled with the utmost care and were never drugged or sedated' The special



effects were also worthy of a mention. Created by young Pericles Lewnes (who died 3 times in *Troma's War*), they include a startling sequence where the hero throws Japanese noodles in a bad guys face. They work their way into his mouth, nose, and ears, then his stomach inflates and he explodes,' says Lewnes, proudly; 'I did it for \$10.'

One thing for sure and that is everyone involved in a Troma production has a lot of fun. Says *Kabukiman* star Rick Gianasi, 'In what other movie could an actor wear a dress, play serious suspense scenes with a chimpanzee, put a handful of specially trained worms in his mouth, fly 30 feet above the ground with an increasingly frayed fly-wire slowly cutting into his armpits, sing an aria from Madame

Butterfly, dress up like a clown, get thrown onto the hood of a fast-moving car, crash through the plate glass window of a Brooklyn dry-cleaning store AND eat those famous Troma lunches on the set. Other Troma masterpieces to look out for in the future include the \$3 million *Sub-humanoid Meltdown - The Class Of Nuke 'Em High 2* and *Def By Temptation* a classy terror tale written, directed by, and starring somebody called James Bond III. The latter tells of a divinity student who goes to New York City



and gets caught up in the clutches of a 'succubs' - a wanton temptress who lures men to her bed before killing them. Screened at last year's London Film Festival, it has already proven one of Troma's major successes and is due for video release shortly.

Having just signed a multi-million dollar co-production deal with Japan's \$110 billion strong trading giant Marubi, the future looks extremely bright for messrs Kaufman and Herz. So let's finish by wishing them luck as they push on into the 90s. They may never achieve their long-term goal of 'World Peace Through Celluloid,' but it seems likely that they will continue to 'Tromatize' the entertainment industry for many years to come with their unique vision.

